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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 HARARE 000547

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NSC FOR SENIOR AFRICA DIRECTOR C. COURVILLE

E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/31/2010
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [EFIN](#) [PHUM](#) [ZI](#) [ZANU](#) [PF](#)
SUBJECT: ZANU-PF POLITBURO MEMBER DISMISSIVE OF PARTY,S
POTENTIAL TO LEAD REFORM

REF: HARARE 128

Classified By: Ambassador Christopher W. Dell under Section 1.4 b/d

11. (C) SUMMARY: In a candid exchange with the Ambassador on April 6, politburo member and former Finance Minister Simba Makoni asked about U.S. reaction to the elections. The Ambassador explained USG objections, sharing with Makoni a copy of the Embassy press release. Makoni said the U.S. analysis of election irregularities was the most detailed he had seen. Still, he predicted it would have little effect, since ZANU-PF had known the U.S. would never endorse a ZANU-PF victory. Noting the degree of self-delusion that exists within the party, Makoni predicted that a more confident ZANU-PF would emerge from the elections. However, it was not likely to alter its political or economic policies significantly. In that regard, Makoni asserted that Mugabe was not impervious to reason but that most of the government and senior ranks of the party, and especially the &young Turks,8 lacked the political courage needed to argue with Mugabe in favor of needed reforms. Makoni confirmed that some in the leadership were interested in rapprochement with the West but not on terms other than their own. Makoni closed with a pitch for USG support of his candidacy for the ADB presidency. END SUMMARY

The Election

12. (C) Makoni asked the Ambassador how the USG regarded Zimbabwe's parliamentary elections. Recounting a litany of flaws in the election's conduct and the Zimbabwe Election Commission's (ZEC) failure to address discrepancies, the Ambassador characterized the election results as not credible. The Ambassador shared the Embassy's publicly released assessment on the elections. Makoni said it was the most detailed critique he had seen and raised issues about which he and others in the leadership were unaware. However, he said most in the party would discount the U.S. statement, since they believed the U.S. had made up its mind in advance to reject a ZANU-PF victory.

13. (C) In defense of the elections, Makoni offered a detailed description about how the presence of party polling agents throughout the process, including at tabulation centers, was to have prevented rigging and observed that the MDC leadership's claims of "massive fraud" had yet to be backed up by any details. He added that their claims were also undermined by the MDC,s (alleged) initial embrace of the results when early returns from Harare and Bulawayo showed them sweeping the two urban centers. That said, Makoni acknowledged that ZEC should have an institutional interest in clearing up doubts about the election by releasing the numbers.

A Dysfunctional Ruling Party That Can,t/Won,t Lead Reform

14. (C) While Makoni defended the election results, he did concede that popular support for the ruling party was shallow. He cited a study he had done for the party in the mid-90s that showed ZANU-PF getting a larger share of the vote but in a declining electorate. That situation had only worsened and ZANU-PF was now a "mass-based" party that depended on a committed minority to hold on to power. Every day was now &campaign day8 for ZANU-PF as the party had to work to maintain support in the face of continuing economic difficulties. The problem was that many in ZANU-PF were convinced by their own rhetoric and believed they had the people with them and therefore no need to change. This was not true, especially with regard to economic policies, where the populace at large was clamoring for change.

15. (C) Makoni said there was an expectation in some quarters that the ruling party, more confident of its standing in the wake of its electoral showing, might move forward with more constructive economic and political policy agendas. However, he thought political expediency would undermine any push for reform. On the economy for instance, his area of expertise, the leadership would probably assess that the right economic

policies would involve unacceptable political costs. Even with a decisive election victory, the party would be loath to embrace painful economic medicine. He added that in any event, economic liberalization had not been a ZANU-PF priority since at least 2000.

16. (C) Makoni said further constraining ZANU-PF's ability to lead reform was the deference to Mugabe by all in positions of potential influence. It was true that Mugabe's worldview remained suspicious of markets and the West. That said, in Makoni's experience, Mugabe was not impervious to persuasion and could chart a more constructive course if enough trusted advisers weighed in. Unfortunately, no one in Mugabe's inner circle was willing to risk his displeasure and tell him the hard truths. The Ambassador noted not without reason, for instance, Mugabe's suppression of internal debate on the margins of the December Party Congress and Makoni's own dismissal as Finance Minister when he advocated reforms. Makoni conceded the point.

17. (C) Makoni said that impetus for change, if any, within the party was most likely to come from some in the ascendant "Old Guard." The "Young Turks" and "technocrats" lacked the courage of their convictions and had proven incapable of asserting themselves effectively. He recounted his own experience in falling from grace as Finance Minister several years ago. Many in the politburo agreed with his market-oriented prescriptions but left him isolated during politburo meetings. He concluded that these individuals bore greater responsibility for Zimbabwe's economic disaster than even Mugabe himself because they knew better but were too timid to act.

Bilateral Relations

18. (C) The Ambassador asked if the country's desperate need for re-engagement with international financial institutions and the West would be a powerful enough incentive to take concrete measures that are a precondition to any conceivable rapprochement with the United States and other like-minded governments. Makoni conceded that, notwithstanding the GOZ's "look East" rhetoric, there was nowhere for Zimbabwe to turn but to the West for economic recovery. However, by any measure the economy had collapsed years ago and with the rise of informal markets, was not as bad off (as compared to 2002-03) as it might appear. The GOZ was more likely to remain in its familiar anti-imperialist posture and just "muddle through" before it would pursue concrete political or economic reforms in any "charm offensive." That said, he urged the Ambassador to wait for the dust to settle on the election and then discuss bilateral relations with selected GOZ and ruling party officials. Makoni suggested reaching out to Party Chairman John Nkomo, Secretary for Administration Didymus Mutasa, and Defense Minister Sydney Sekeramayi. Vice-President Joyce Mujuru would be constrained for now by the newness of her position but was "open-minded" and might be a constructive interlocutor down the road.

19. (C) Makoni emphasized that the government was not the "beginning and end" of Zimbabwe, and also urged strong USG engagement with other potentially influential figures. Civil society and the churches remained important. Mugabe was religious despite his Marxist leanings, and listened to clerics such as Zimbabwe's senior Jesuit, Father Fidelis, and Anglican Bishop Kunonga. Mugabe also respected and liked to engage with self-made businesspersons such as John Chiweshe (Chairman of the Tobacco Merchants Association) and safari mogul Mike Chidziwa. As for himself, Makoni said he remained on good terms with Mugabe and could see him whenever he asked. They continued to have frank exchanges and Makoni asserted the Mugabe continued to enjoy intellectual debate. He dispelled popular notions that Mugabe had dismissed him for his economic proposals; rather, Makoni had resigned when he realized that his proposals would never be adopted.

Pitch for ADB Presidency

10. (C) Makoni closed with a request for American support of his candidacy for the presidency of the African Development Bank (ADB) and laid out his (admittedly strong) personal qualifications for the job. The Ambassador undertook to relay the request to Washington but noted that Makoni's nationality might pose complications given the state of bilateral relations. Makoni emphasized that ADB candidates competed as individuals on the strength of their own merits and not as government representatives. In his case, SADC members had collaborated to get behind one candidate from their region; he earned their endorsement in a competitive process, which spoke to the strength of his credentials and the breadth of his appeal. He recognized that at least one candidate was using his "wrong address" against him, shopping the idea that Makoni was subject to travel sanctions even

though he is not on U.S. or EU sanctions lists. He urged that the USG weigh these factors and give his candidacy full consideration.

Comment

11. (C) In a Mass Public Opinion Institute poll a year ago, Makoni was the only putative successor to Mugabe aside from MDC President Morgan Tsvangirai who garnered significant support from all provinces. That Makoni, one of Zimbabwe's most impressive senior technocrats, has essentially given up on Zimbabwe's politics to seek the ADB job, speaks volumes about the lack of oxygen inside the ruling party leadership. We agree with his assessment that post-election ZANU-PF will be no more dynamic or capable of constructive policy shifts than pre-election ZANU-PF was. Indeed, his views tend to confirm our own analysis that ZANU-PF will be incapable of reforming itself, much less Zimbabwe, as long as it is an institution made in the image of Robert Mugabe and bent solely to his personal political ends. As noted in reftel, we think that endorsement of his ADB candidacy could send the wrong signal to the GOZ, notwithstanding Mr. Makoni's individual merits. Moreover, despite his wishes, we think Makoni can do more good if he stays in Zimbabwe rather than in effect joining the millions of other bright Zimbabweans who have fled their country.
Dell